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Collection and disposal policy 2005-2010

Background

The Crafts Study Centre's Collecting and Disposal Policy 2005-2010 has been written after a period of consultation and debate both internally and externally. It replaces the Centre's Acquisition and Disposal Policy 1999-2004. The new policy has been written to take account both of externally driven changes in the museums and galleries environment, and to reflect on the new situation whereby the Crafts Study Centre occupies (since June 2004) new purpose-built museum and research centre premises. The external and other factors shaping the new policy are:

- The requirements of museum accreditation
- The Crafts Study Centre's Business Plan 2004-2007
- The Museums Associations Code of Ethics for Museums (2002)
- The Joint Agreement between the Trustees of the Crafts Study Centre and The Surrey Institute of Art & Design
- Resources and space

None of these policies and institutional requirements was in place in 1999 when Trustees approved the Centre's acquisition and disposal policy.

Development of the policy

The Crafts Study Centre has benefited almost since its establishment and from the outset of its life as a public museum collection holding objects and archives in trust, from advice and guidance on collecting material evidence of craft practice and process. This advice has been given in the context of a formal Acquisition Committee, chaired by the Chair of the Crafts Study Centre's Board of Trustees. The make up of the Committee has been led by the principle that senior and distinguished craft practitioners, as well as senior curators and historians of the crafts should form the membership. The terms of reference for the Committee were amended in 2004, observing the principle that it should be a practitioner-led group.

The Collecting and Disposal Policy 2005-2010 was written after a series of meetings between the Director and Collections Manager of the Crafts Study Centre and expert advisors on the Acquisition Committee, within their specialist subject groupings. The draft policy was reviewed by the Acquisition Committee meeting in December 2004 and then by Trustees and the Management Group of the Centre.

It was approved in May 2005 after a period of external consultation with key organisations (such as the Crafts Council, British Council, Arts Council England), and museums and galleries with craft collections (such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, Brighton and Hove Museums, Manchester City Art Galleries, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art), to ensure that the policy has the proper focus and rationale within the wider and dispersed 'national collection' of crafts held in trust in museums in the UK.

The policy will be published on the Crafts Study Centre website: www.csc.ucreative.ac.uk.

The external environment

Code of Ethics

The Museums Associations Code of Ethics for Museums (2002) governs the 'ethical principles for all who work in or govern museums in the UK'. Specific guidelines to ensure the proper acquisition of objects is outlined in section 5 of the Code ('Society can expect museums to acquire items honestly and responsibly').

The Crafts Study Centre will act according to the Museums Associations Code of Ethics for Museums, and use the Code as the basis for its Collecting and Disposal Policy 2005-2010.

The Museum Accreditation Scheme

The Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) launched a new scheme of Museum Accreditation in November 2004. It is a new minimum standard for museums and will eventually replace the current Registration scheme. Currently, the Crafts Study Centre is a registered museum (930).

The new requirements for the accreditation scheme include the need to publish a wide-ranging Acquisition and Disposal Policy. The Crafts Study Centre's Collecting and Disposal Policy 2005-2010 forms an integral part of this policy.

Crafts Study Centre policy development

The Joint Agreement

The Joint Agreement between the Trustees of the Crafts Study Centre and The Surrey Institute of Art & Design, University describes in detail the roles and responsibilities of various management and specialist committees. The Management Group of the Crafts Study Centre formally approves acquisitions and disposals, working in close consort with the Acquisitions Committee. The Collecting and Disposal Policy will be adhered to at all times by both Management Group and Acquisition Committee. The membership of the Acquisition Committee comprises two expert advisors for each of the subject areas represented in the Collection, these being textiles, calligraphy and lettering, ceramics, wood and archives. The Chair of the Crafts Study Centre chairs the meetings, with one other Trustee as an ex officio member of the Committee. The Director is an ex officio member of the Committee. The Acquisition Committee meets two times a year (May and December). It has an annual budget of £2,000.

Policy Statement

The Acquisition Committee of the Crafts Study Centre operates on behalf of the Trustees to recommend additions to the permanent collections by gift, purchase, donation and other appropriate means. The Committee works with the Director to oversee the development of the collections in accordance with the collecting and disposal policy. The Committee will only consider loans in exceptional circumstances, and there will be a presumption against loans. The Committee has a scrutiny role in relation to the Collecting and Disposal Policy.

The Acquisition Committee will make recommendations for purchase or donation and hold two meetings per year to review potential additions to the collection (where this is practicable). Executive authority to add work to the collections in accordance with the Collecting and Disposal policy is vested, in addition, in the post of the Director. The Director will take account of the advice of expert advisors and consult with them, in between Committee meetings, where it is essential make a decision.

Crafts Study Centre Business Plan 2004-2007

The overarching document for the management and programme of the Crafts Study Centre is the business plan. It sets out the key aim of the Centre:

To give access to 20th century and contemporary crafts in order to develop understanding and enjoyment for diverse audiences

In addition the Centre has a specific objective related to the function of collecting:

To safeguard and develop the Crafts Study Centre's collections, and make them and the Crafts Study Centre accessible to the widest possible audience.

Within this specific objective lies the ongoing task 'to add to the collections according to the collecting and disposal policy'.

Resources and space

These factors also limit the capacity of the Crafts Study Centre to add very significant numbers of objects to the collections. The current stores are nearing full capacity, and this will inevitably mean that additions to the collections will be of individual items, or smaller groups of items, manageable in scale.

Alternatively, formal partnerships with external organisations to store or display material off site will be discussed if this is in the best interests of both organisations and the care of the collections. Trustees have committed £10,000 for the purchase of items over the period of the policy, and grants will be sought to increase this amount for particular items.

Developing the Crafts Study Centre collections 2005-2010

The Crafts Study Centre has developed a wide reputation as a unique collection and archive of 20th century British crafts. The Centre was founded for the purpose of making a permanent collection of work by the finest British artist-craftspeople of the 20th century. The collections are currently strongest in work between the period 1920s - 1970s. Its primary collections have focused on work of quality and specific interest by pioneer craftspeople who rediscovered and revived techniques that might otherwise have been lost. In addition, examples of work by craftspeople not resident in Britain have been collected or other international work, where these items profoundly influenced British craftspeople. (For example, source material held in the sometime private collections of Bernard Leach and Ethel Mairet; new calligraphy by Thomas Ingmire, resident in San Francisco). The collection has focused, and will continue to focus, on the key subject areas of:

Ceramics

Printed, painted or dyed textiles; woven textiles

Calligraphy and lettering

Furniture and wood

Craft archives

The addition of craft objects in new subject areas will be the subject of special approval of the Trustees, on the advice of the Acquisition Committee, mindful, in particular of the current constraints of space and resources on the development of new collections.

Most of the collection has been built up through donations, often directly from makers. The Acquisition Committee has also commissioned work by contemporary practitioners for the permanent collection, and purchased work directly from makers. A list of the makers represented in the collections is available on request. The Crafts Study Centre will work to identify and use additional funds to support the annual budget for expenditure, from trusts and relevant organisations such as The Art Fund and the Purchase Grant Fund operated by the Victoria & Albert Museum on behalf of the MLAC.

The Crafts Study Centre will work collaboratively with other museums and organisations to ensure that the development of the collections proceeds to mutual benefit. The Centre will take special account of the craft collections held by the Crafts Council, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Council, Hove Museum and Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery and Museum, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Shipley Art Gallery and other relevant craft collections held in public institutions.

Acquisitions will satisfy the Centre's aim of encouraging access to, understanding and enjoyment of, 20th century and contemporary craft collections. The selection should illustrate a combination of aesthetic and technical excellence; or be of particular historic importance (for example by illustrating the scope and range of a makers work across their career); or demonstrate a skilled use of materials and the application of craft techniques to achieve particular qualities in the work.

Specific statements for the subject areas of the collection for the period 2005-2010 are shown below:

Ceramics

New acquisitions will focus on domestic and utilitarian works, and concentrate on British ceramics from the 1970s (especially makers trained during this period at the Royal College of Art) that bring the earlier collections of pioneer makers into a contemporary idiom. In addition, work from ceramicists represented in the Centre's exhibition programme should be added (Magdalene Odundo; David Leach; Gwyn Hanssen Pigott; Takeshi Yasuda; Emmanuel Cooper).

Textiles

New acquisitions will focus on textile work designed, made and controlled by the individual practitioner. Priority will be given to established makers, including work representing the span of their careers. Priority will be given to printed, painted or dyed textiles; woven textiles. In particular, it is intended that work will be purchased or commissioned from the following makers during the period 2005-2010: Sally Greaves-Lord (accessories); Stella Benjamin; Ann Richards; Sue Hartree; Georgina von Etzdorf. Craft wallpapers designed, made or controlled by the individual practitioner especially in the period post 1970 will also be added to the collections.

Calligraphy and Lettering

New acquisitions will aim to strengthen the core holdings of the collection (by seeking donations) to improve the representation of the generation of letterers since Edward Johnston and Irene Wellington. We should seek to add work by Jack Trowbridge, Edward Wates, Eric Gill, Ralph Beyer, David and Richard Kindersley. New work should be commissioned from Gaynor Goffe and Gary Breeze.

Furniture and wood

New acquisitions will focus on small, domestic items of craft furniture by individual makers in order to develop the current collection. New work will be purchased or commissioned from Jim Partridge, Guy Martin and Fred Baier. A particular emphasis shall be placed on securing archives of makers represented in the collections.

Craft archives

Archives of work by makers represented in the collections will be added where possible, and the archive of Alan Peters will be especially considered. Consideration should be given to adding archive material, where appropriate, from makers represented in the Centre's temporary exhibition programme. The Crafts Study Centre should collect institutional records, and records of craft guilds and societies, and promotional organisations with a national and regional focus and reach.